

CHARMED IN CHAPPAQUA

Charm Su, of Mark Gould Architect, melds minds with her firm's client, a prominent contractor with a strong point of view—to spectacular effect **BY JOANNA PETTAS**

OPPOSITE PAGE: The living room of this French Normandy-style Chappaqua residence is painted in a bold shade of orange, while the adjacent family room (BACKGROUND) features a softer, more feminine, floral wallpaper. Simple white moldings and square metal plates—seen in the living room as accessories and in the family room as corner blocks—provide a common thread.

What happens when an architect's client turns out to be a successful, prominent contractor with plenty of expertise in residential building and his own strong point of view? In this case, a 6,000-square-foot French Normandy-style Chappaqua home with not one inch in its spectacular design left to chance.

Mark Gould Architect, an architecture- and interior-design firm based in Manhattan, took five years to complete this many-layered project, with design director Charm Su taking the lead on all aspects, ranging from the material used for the roof to finding tablecloths to match the furniture she sourced. (Rough plans for the house existed when Mark Gould Architect took over the project, but the materials, the interior design, and many aspects of the layout were determined by MGA.) Two-thirds of the house was built on the foundation of a demolished cottage, and two wings were added onto that. The client had two main, immutable decrees—he wanted to be able to see from one end of the first floor to the other, and he wanted metal to be incorpo-

rated throughout as a design element. All the other choices, big and small, were made through a collaborative process between designer and client.

"It is rare to work with a client with this kind of sophistication," says Su. "He cared about every detail." For the tile on the wall in the library, for example, the client wanted a specific shade of indigo for the grout, which he and Su searched "the whole country" to find. But his requests were not whims—"he had reasons behind every one. We had lots of discussions and went through lots of trial and error," Su says.

The project's highly evolutionary nature made the process more challenging—but, ultimately, more rewarding, Su says. "I welcome challenge, because that makes the story. A house needs a story. I always think, 'How is this house different from any other? What makes it special?'"

One thing that makes this house special is the metalwork. "Metal is, by nature, very cold and hard, not something you want to live with," says Su. "So I asked myself, 'How can we make metal feel warm?'" Together, she and the client



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